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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 1239
RUEHRY/AMEMBASSY CONAKRY IMMEDIATE 2592
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 STATE 123621

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO OIIP KIRC
SUBJECT: CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR AMERICAN CORNERS
SUSTAINING FUNDS IN FY10

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¶1. The American Corners Steering Committee is now
calling for proposals for sustaining funds for American
Corners (AC) partnerships. While specific funding
cannot be guaranteed, the call for proposals will enable
R, IIP, and the PD offices in the regional bureaus to
evaluate proposals and make decisions when and if
funding becomes available. This cable outlines the
procedures for requesting funds for ACs for FY10. Please
note that there are significant changes in the format
for the FY10 proposals. A recommended outline for the
narrative portion is provided while a required
spreadsheet for the numerical and data portion is
available as described below.

¶2. With 400 ACs worldwide, the opening of new ACs
continues to be examined with great care in R, IIP, and
the PD offices in the regional bureaus. Strengthening
and evaluating ACs already in operation is the top
priority. The proposals for new ACs should provide a
justification for the new AC, review and concurrence by
the Information Resource Officer, and a budget for
acquisition of materials, equipment, and other necessary
expenses. The proposals for new ACs can be offered as
part of the FY10 process. If post intends to ask for new
ACs later in FY10, these proposals must first be
submitted to the PD officers in the regional bureaus and
to the Advisory American Corner Committee. Recognizing
the unique status of bi-national center libraries (BNCs)
in WHA, systematic support is addressed separately by
the PD office in that bureau.

¶3. To qualify for sustaining funds in FY10, an AC must
have officially opened by September 30, 2009, under the
assumption that its first year was funded in FY09.

¶4. Posts should carefully evaluate their existing ACs.
For ACs that are active and serve their intended
purpose, posts should prepare proposals for maintenance
funding that will keep each active AC up-to-date in a
hospitable location that welcomes visitors. For
underperforming ACs, the improvement strategy should be
outlined as the last element in the response to
paragraph 5. For an AC that is inactive and fails to
meet program goals, post should consider steps that will
transfer or close the AC partnership. The link to the
"Guidelines for dissolving an AC partnership" is
included in paragraph 14.

¶5. Each post's proposal for sustaining funds should
follow this narrative structure:
¶A. Summary statement giving a rationale that describes
the overall impact and major activities of the AC and
how it fits into post's PD program. Posts with multiple
ACs can have one introduction for the country.

¶B. Review and concurrence by the regional Information

Resource Officer (IRO) is a required step in the process. IROs will be expected to comment on the viability of the AC and on the proposal for FY10. Regional IROs have actively monitored and supported ACs through visits and training for AC staffers in all regions. Each IRO is an invaluable resource for assisting in the development of AC sustaining funds proposals and for new AC proposals. Your IRO is prepared to review your proposal and to confirm your post's participation in the review of the core characteristics of your ACs. For PD-lite or orphan posts not currently assigned to an IRO, courtesy visits and training have been conducted. Please consult those IROs for review of your proposals.

¶C. In narrative format, please supply brief descriptions of the following elements. For posts with multiple ACs, please provide a description of how each element applies to each individual AC, as appropriate.

*   How FY09 sustainability funding was used and its impact at individual ACs;

*   Amount of post funds provided in FY09 excluding sustainability funding;

*   Value and description of private donations received, estimated
in USD;

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*   Description of programs offered at the ACs listed by title

*   Description of media coverage of AC events;

*   Training and professional development of AC staff accomplished in FY09 through training at post or at regional venues;

*   Plan of action for the near future;

*   Strategy for improvement if the AC is underperforming.

¶6. For each AC, the proposal should then include the following data in the required new spreadsheet format:

*   Number of visitors per year;
*   Number of programs held;
*   Total attendance at programs;
*   Most popular programs: Please use numbers to indicates categories, i.e., movie nights-1, Embassy speakers-2, exhibits-3, clubs-4, other-please specify);
*   Most popular materials: Please user numbers to indicate categories, i.e., books-1, DVDs-2, periodicals-3, Internet research-4, ESL materials-5, other- please specify);
*   Audiences reached (i.e., students-1, adults-2, professionals-3, children-4);
*   Number of Embassy oversight visits to AC (FSO and/or FSN);

¶7. The proposals, using the same new spreadsheet format, must also show that the post's AC participation in the American Corners Cooperative Database (ACCD) is up-to-date. To update your ACs' information in the ACCD, visit the site at http://accentral.state.gov. Registered editors can upload all necessary information. To register an editor, click on the Register New User link at the bottom right corner. Please designate an editor for this purpose before requesting sustaining funds.

*   Each AC's directory information in the ACCD is
complete and up-to-date.

*   There are current reports in the ACCD relating to
the activities of the post's ACs.

*   Please confirm that you have a designated editor.

¶8. The proposal must also confirm on the required
spreadsheet that each AC partner conforms to these core
characteristics:

*   MOU with current effective date is posted to the
ACCD and is signed by partners, i.e., the Embassy
and the host organization;

*   AC offers public access to collections of
information about the U.S. such as books, IIP
publications, CD-ROMs, periodicals, DVDs, and
posters;

*   Collections should have a minimum of 800 titles;

*   AC staffer assigned by host organization speaks
serviceable English;

*   AC offers reference service that is modeled on that
of a small American public library;

*   AC offers supervised Internet access if country has
Internet providers;

*   AC serves as multifunctional program platform for
the Embassy;

*   AC provides adequate space for hosting collections
and programs;

*   AC hosts a minimum of SIX (increased from four)
programs per year;

¶9. Submit an itemized budget not to exceed $10,000 per
AC. Posts should indicate how much of their own funds
will be used for AC operations in FY10. Training needed
for AC and FSN staff working with ACs is a high priority
and travel to regional workshops should be included in

the budget section. WHA posts should consider asking
for travel funds to cover AC partners' attendance at the
Association of Binational Centers of Latin America
(ABLA) 2010 conference in Colombia in July. EUR and
Central Asian posts should consider asking for travel
funds to cover participation in the international
library conference in Crimea in June 2010. "Sustaining
funds are for sustainability" is the rule of thumb in
prioritizing spending for ACs. Thus, PAS travel to ACs
should not be charged to AC sustaining funds unless
there is a strong justification. AC funds should not be
used to support other PD activities such as the travel
and training of educational advisors. Because of serious
computer security problems at some host institutions, it
is advisable for posts to consider purchase and
installation of anti-virus software on equipment granted
to partner institutions. Developing collections that
match local needs is critical for creating vibrant
American Corners. Posts are encouraged to use
sustaining funds to acquire bilingual dictionaries and
locally appropriate materials that will help Corners
reach and teach audiences with limited English language
skills.

Please note that use of FY10 sustaining funds for
regular salaries of AC staff is not authorized.

¶10. Completed proposals for sustaining funds (prioritized as needed if there are multiple ACs) as well as for new ACs should be submitted NLT January 15, 2010 by email or cable to the appropriate Cultural Coordinator in the regional bureau PD Offices AND to the AC Coordinator in IIP/IR, Barbara Conaty, conatybx@state.gov. Proposals will be reviewed and prioritized by regional bureau PD Offices in consultation with IIP, in the context of Bureau and Department strategic goals.

¶11. FY06 Congressional Conference Committee language mandates that IIP exercise oversight of the AC program. The AC Steering Committee appreciates receiving reports from posts that provide the foundation for this oversight and for necessary funding decisions. The PD officers in the regional bureaus make the strategic and funding decisions, while IROs and the AC Coordinator can advise on training, resources, and compliance with core requirements.

¶12. Please refer questions on AC policy to your regional bureau's PD Officer, your regional IRO, or to IIP's AC Coordinator Barbara Conaty conatybx@state.gov. Barbara and Program Analyst Eileen Deegan, deeganeg@state.gov, can help with queries about the American Corners Cooperative Database.

¶13. To compile the information asked for in paras 5-8, there is a required new template available at the IIP/IR portal. Please paste this URL into your browser: http://tinyurl.com/ye8x83q. The template can also be obtained from Barbara Conaty, conatybx@state.gov or Eileen Deegan, deeganeg@state.gov, on request.

¶14. Closing or transferring ineffective ACs to new partners will enhance the integrity of the program and the ACs. Reports received at training workshops and in the American Corner Cooperative Database show that many ACs are struggling with uncooperative host institutions, lack of English language skills, lack of programming skills, lack of fresh resources from PAS, and lack of basic infrastructure to keep the venue in operation. While one factor is not enough to shut the AC doors, a combination of factors might mean that in FY10, the AC program at your post should be suspended until new partners and new resources can be identified. Please review the Guidelines for Dissolving an American Corner Partnership at http://tinyurl.com/ybsx4a6 to assist your analysis of the robustness of ACs in your country.

¶15. Minimize considered.

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